

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
August 9, 2020 10th Sunday after Pentecost

207 South Brodie St. Thunder Bay
<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca>

Words of Welcome

If you were to describe yourself what words would you use?
Would there be any place in there that you would say you are a believer in God?
Questions to ponder, as we seek to understand our relationship with God.
Join me as we come together with a call to worship.

Call to Worship

Here, in this place, God welcomes all the dreamers,
as well as the doubters:
here, the worriers and wanderers
can call on God by name.

Here, in this time, we can remember
all the ways God has graced us:
here, in these moments, we are reminded
that God is with us, always!

Here are gathered those daring enough
to step out of comfort into the unknown:
here, in this faith space, we will find the courage
to cry out, 'God, save us!' in every situation.

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Hymn

Send me, Lord

777

1. Send me, Jesus; send me, Jesus; send me, Jesus; Send me, Lord
2. Lead me, Jesus; lead me, Jesus; lead me, Jesus; lead me, Lord.
3. Fill me, Jesus; fill me, Jesus; fill me, Jesus; fill me, Lord.

"Send me, Lord/Thuma Mina," text: South African © 1984, Utryck, Walton Music Corp., agent All rights reserved. Reprinted under OneLicense.net A-723877

Opening Prayer

Surprising and mysterious God,
you come to us when we least expect it,
calling us out of our routines and our plans,
inviting us to follow Christ on a great journey of faith.
We praise you for the many ways you comfort and guide us.
In our moments of fear, you speak to us with words of reassurance.
In our moments of doubt, you reach out your hand to save us.
In our moments of turmoil, you bring calm to the storm.
We place our trust in you this day and every day,
and worship you as our Redeemer and Saviour.

Merciful and patient God,
We confess that we still live in fear and doubt,
even though we have been touched by your saving grace.
You call us to live with courage and perseverance,
yet we give up too easily and opt for the safer route.
You encourage us to be bold in our faith and steadfast in our fight for justice,
yet we remain silent in the face of inequality and violence.
Forgive us all the times we have let you down.
Renew our lives through your mercy and grace.
Open the scripture to us so that we may understand, believe, and be changed.
In Jesus we pray. Amen.

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Assurance of Pardon

Rest assured, God's forgiveness and saving grace are for everyone.
Accept these gifts for yourselves
and offer forgiveness to others in the name of Christ our Lord.

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Scripture Reading - Romans 10:5-15

⁵Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that "the person who does these things will live by them." ⁶But the righteousness that comes from faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷"or 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸But what does it say?

"The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart"

(that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. ¹¹The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." ¹²For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. ¹³For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

¹⁴But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? ¹⁵And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

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The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Message How beautiful!

If you are anything like me you have walked into the middle of a conversation and couldn't clue into what people were talking about. Well, that is what it's like today when it comes to the scripture reading from Romans. We have dropped into the middle of a

conversation that started back in chapter nine and goes on until chapter eleven. But since I only have a few minutes to share with you a little something about this passage let me give you some context.

Paul is concerned, he knows that Jesus has come to fulfill the law, which could mean the Ten Commandments or a broader theme of Torah, the Hebrew scriptures, of which the Ten Commandments are a part, but his fellow Jewish people are not paying attention. We know from Paul, that he and the disciples of Jesus, understood that Jesus was the fulfilment of God's promise to Jew and Greek, in other words, the chosen people of God of the Old Testament and from them to the world.

The promise? To deal with sin so that people could be in right relationship with God and one another. But as I said, the problem was that most the Jewish people did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah, the word made flesh, and so Paul was perplexed and upset that the very people that Jesus came to were not turning to Christ, but continuing on as if the Messiah had not shown up.

Because of this Paul delves into the Hebrew scriptures and quotes Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and Isaiah, to help make the point that Jesus has changed how people can understand what God is up to and fulfills what they had hoped for decades, that is, someone who would forgive their sin and put them in right relationship with God. Regardless, at this point Paul has stated that "there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'" (10:12-13). So regardless of whether one is Jew, Greek, or us today, all of us fall short of our calling as children of God who live without sin.

Scholar N.T. Wright defines sin as "the human failure of vocation, with all that this entails. When we sin, we abuse our calling, our privileges, and our possibilities."¹

Sin is turning away from the source of life. This is not about good moral behaviour; it is about relationship. When we turn away from God, the creator, and are not living as children of God, of being image bearers of God to other human beings, then we sin. The last line of the scripture says it all, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Romans 10:15b).

Image bearers of God bring the Good News of the possibility of a right relationship with God, themselves and others. Image bearers have a way of helping to restore individuals to healthy, loving community just by being present in someone's life in a way that is life giving to the other person, not life draining. Image bearers are people who light the way for others through their words, actions, and presence. Image bearers do not see themselves as the light, but rather as the beacon of light that points others in the direction of a relationship with God the creator who himself became flesh in Jesus Christ.

¹ Wright. N.T. The Day the Revolution Began: Reconsidering the Meaning of Jesus's Crucifixion. Harper Collins Publishers. New York. 2016. P84.

Each of us has this vocation to be image bearers of God to other humans, to be the beautiful feet of those who bring good news! We may do this in many ways. Some people are good with words, some are better at giving of their energy, all of it asks for us to take time for others. It can be the smile and gentle conversation when you see that a clerk has had a difficult time with a customer. It may be that you volunteer for an hour, a week, a month, or whatever you can give, to individuals or organizations that need help.

It may be that you take the time to put down your device and have a conversation with the person you encounter who is sitting six feet from you on the other end of a park bench or waiting in a line to get into a store. It may be that you pick up the phone and are present for someone who is grieving or lonely. Maybe you cook a meal and drop it off for a family that is overwhelmed with responsibilities as teacher, parent, and front-line worker all at the same time. Maybe you start tackling injustice in your conversations, in your workplace, and in your community.

It is also that if someone asks you what motivates you, you share about your faith, about God and Jesus, even if you risk them looking at you sideways. No need to give a speech, just be honest about how your faith informs your life. Remember, "The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart, because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

And what does it mean to be saved? It means that you are in right relationship with God, yourself, and others. It does not mean that you will get everything right. Sorry, you and I are still human, but it does mean that through our relationship with Jesus, with God, and with the Holy Spirit working in us, we can be image bearers of God who live out our vocation as children of God. It means that people may see a glimpse of God in us, of Jesus' love, and the power of the Holy Spirit and think that just maybe they too can be transformed and live in a way that brings hope, healing, and opportunity for right relationship with God and others.

But no one can know what is possible if they do not go out and take risks. Trust that you do not step out alone. The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart. Jesus is right there with you, present not in some future time, but in the moment. You may stumble, feel foolish, and reassess how to handle things another time, but be patient with yourself and with God. You can make a difference. You can be an image bearer. You can love, hope, laugh, cry, get frustrated, and make a difference, as long as you remember that you are an image bearer, albeit an imperfect image bearer, but none the less, called by God.

This is not about you; it is about sharing the loving, caring, patience, and compassionate character of God with others in a way that they can glimpse God. It is about having Christ at the center of your life in a way that welcomes everyone, that includes everyone. This is one of the biggest pieces that separates the church from people belonging to another group. Groups are exclusive, the church is there for anyone. It is inclusive, or it should be. There is no us or them because Christ died for everyone to be able to be in right relationship with God and be given the opportunity to be an image bearer of God.

As you look for how God is working in you to be an image bearer, remember this, take it to heart, believe it for yourself, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” You have beautiful feet, use them as you are able to bring the good news to those God sets in your life. Amen.

Closing Prayer

God of all people,
your love and grace sustain the world and all who live in it. When we foolishly set up walls between people, you tear them down and draw us into one family, united in Christ and in compassion.

The pandemic has filled so many nations and neighbours with turmoil and fear.
So we come before you with prayers for the world you love.

Astonishing God, you surprise us.

You come to us in unforeseen circumstances and in unexpected people.

We give you thanks for all the healers and heroes who have stepped forward during the pandemic to surprise us with kindness and courage.

We pray for all who still face upheaval and uncertainty because of COVID-19.

Call out leaders with wisdom and imagination to address the fear and change we are facing. And fill our hearts with compassion and understanding for the most fearful.

God of peace, you reassure us.

You remind us not to be afraid when troubles arise.

We pray for all people who live in precarious situations not related to the pandemic.

Assure them they are not forgotten.

We pray for those who struggle with illness, grief or depression. May they know your peace and strength.

Equip us to reach out in every way we can to embody your love in our words and actions.

God of hope, you challenge us.

You come to us in the midst of trouble and invite us to stand for justice and work for truth.

We pray for all those people crying out for fair treatment, working against racism and discrimination, telling painful stories of their lives.

Open our hearts with understanding and motivate us to act for change.

We pray for those who resist the stories of injustice and defend inequality.

Open their minds to the truths they deny and show them new possibilities for relationships that bridge divides.

Send your Spirit to work in our communities to create mutual respect and new ways to live as neighbours.

Faithful God, we place our trust in you and your purposes. Answer our prayers according to your wisdom and will, for we offer them humbly in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray together:

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Invitation to make an offering

Thankful for the good gifts God gives us in Christ and in creation, we have an opportunity to present the fruit of our living—gifts and offerings for the work of God in the church and in the world.

If you would like to make a donation toward the life and ministry of St. Andrew's Presbyterian in Thunder Bay visit our website at <http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> for more information.

Hymn

We've a story to tell to the nations

765

1. We've a story to tell to the nations
that shall turn their hearts to the right,
a story of truth and mercy, a story of peace and light,
a story of peace and light,

Refrain:

*for the darkness shall turn to dawning,
and the dawning to noonday bright,
and Christ's great kingdom shall come on earth,
the kingdom of love and light.*

2. We've a song to be sung to the nations
that shall lift their hearts to the Lord,
a song that shall conquer evil
and shatter the spear and sword,
and shatter the spear and sword,

Refrain

3. We've a message to give to the nations,
that the Lord who reigneth above
hath sent us his Son to save us,
and show us that God is love,
and show us that God is love.

Refrain

Benediction

May the generous blessing and favor
of our loving, abundant God
lift you, sustain you, and send
you to the world
with the gift of life!